

PATENT

repeated high-pressure bulk pressing step, followed by crushing and classification. This subsequence of steps may be repeated several times to arrive at the final agglomerated feedstock powder that in turn forms the claimed powder through additional processing. Pressing is typically carried out at pressures on the order of at least 5,000psi, typically greater than 10,000psi, or even greater than 20,000psi. Applicants also emphasize a second point, in that the thus formed agglomerated feedstock powder is subjected to heat treatment in *powder* form. In reference to paragraph 37 of the present specification, Applicants clearly state that sintering is effected to the boron nitride agglomerate in powder form, rather than in any sort of bulk form such as a brick, pellet or a log.

Turning to the cited prior art, Applicants recognize the disclosure pointed out by the PTO, namely teaching of aggregates of fine particles with an irregular shape, which are to be subjected to later processing steps. However, that powder, stated to be commercially available, is not described as having any particular precursor properties which would support a conclusion that further processing would result in a high strength, low-density powder. For example, there is no disclosure of particular precursor processing steps to form the agglomerated powder such as repeated pressing, crushing and classification steps.

Moreover, Hagio et al. expressly teach heat treatment of the material in the form of a consolidated compact. This is precisely contrary to processing conditions associated with the claimed invention, in which heat treatment is carried out in powder form, rather than any sort of bulk form such as a brick, pellet or log. It is quite clear that one of ordinary skill in the art cannot reasonably or even remotely conclude that the product of Hagio et al. is in *powder* form having the claimed high strength and low-density characteristics.

Applicants respectfully submit that the presently claimed invention would not have been anticipated by or even remotely obvious over Hagio et al. Withdrawal of the Section 102/103 rejection over this reference is respectfully requested.

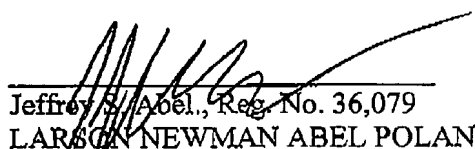
Applicants respectfully submit that the present application continues to be in condition for allowance in line with the previous Notice of Allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to issue a new Notice of Allowance for all pending claims.

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Should the Examiner deem that any further action by the Applicants would be desirable for placing this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 50-3797.

Respectfully submitted,


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Date

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